

SPiRiT OF THE PRESS.

EDITORIAL OPINIONS OF THE LEADING JOURNALS UPON CURRENT TOPICS—COMPILED EVERY DAY FOR THE EVENING TELEGRAPH.

Another Democratic Convention.

From the N. Y. Tribune. The World, apparently speaking in the interest of our city hotels and restaurants, proposes that a convention be held of those Democrats who suffered from arbitrary arrests during the Lincoln reign. Such a convention could only be lodged and fed in New York city, and it would tax our resources to the utmost. There were arrested, without warrant or any lawful process whatever, other than the arbitrary orders of the Secretary of War, at Fort Donelson 15,000; at Vicksburg, 35,000; at Chattanooga, 25,000; at Appomattox and the other closing arrests, say 150,000, besides an aggregate on other miscellaneous occasions of about 200,000, making in all at least 425,000 Democrats arbitrarily arrested without warrant or process during the "Lincoln reign." This would amount, according to the most carefully prepared tables of logarithms, to six in a bed, exclusive of any other vermin, for every Democratic couch in the State of New York, including those at Sing Sing and Auburn. The thing is too big. It can't be done. If the intention is to convene only those who were arrested in Northern States, the question arises, were Pennsylvania, Maryland, Ohio, and Missouri Northern States? If so, the arbitrary arrests made at Gettysburg and Antietam, in Morgan's raid, and in the Missouri battles, must be included. Or is it intended to exclude all who fought openly in Rebel uniform, and admit only the St. Albans raiders, the burners of the New York Orphan Asylum, the agents employed by Blackburn to introduce yellow fever into New York, the conspirators to resist the draft in Ohio and Indiana, to unloose the prisoners at Camp Douglas, Chicago, and to assassinate President Lincoln and his Cabinet? If these are the parties to be summoned, it becomes an important question whether the meeting had not better be deferred awhile. It would be a great discourtesy to hold such a convention unless it could be presided over by J. Wilkes Booth, as Chairman, with the assistance of Paine, Atteroth, Surratt, Blackburn, and others equally distinguished, as Vice-Presidents. So many of these have reached their final destination, and the rest are so plainly on the way, that it would save a heavy expense in lights and fuel to wait till they have all got there. We have no desire to be present at the convention, or to send any of our reporters. But we venture to predict that, for the first time in the history of Democratic Conventions, cold water will be in lively demand and the supply limited.

The Civil Service—Its Fundamental Error.

From the N. Y. Times. The indignation excited by the frauds on internal revenue will be comparatively profitless unless it end in a demand for more than a mere change of officers. The dismissal and punishment of proved rascality are well enough so far as they go. They are a tribute to the popular sense of justice which the Government cannot safely withhold. But as a preventive of further wrong they will amount to little. Every body says, of course, that the vacant places shall be filled by honest and competent men. The Secretary, doubtless, intends to appoint such if he can. The difficulty is that, in the present state of the civil service, the qualifications of integrity and capacity are available to a very limited extent. Other considerations override them. Intrigue and impudence, combined with political support, are mighty, and usually prevail. Availability occupies the place of merit, and the interests of the revenue are intrusted to officials taken hap-hazard, with no reasonable assurance that the future will be better than the past.

In this fact we have one of the countless illustrations of the losses and disgrace inflicted upon the country by its failure to organize a civil service on a rational footing. With a vast array of office-holders, we have, in truth, none of the advantages which a proper organization would present. The elementary qualities of efficiency are absent. No training, no test of fitness, no graduation resting on ability and character, no provision for promotion, no pledge of permanence. How could our civil service be better than it is? Its members have no established relation to the Government; they are the temporary recipients of salaries which a nod of the departmental head may at any moment terminate. At the best, their positions are contingent on the chances of party warfare. No incentive to special study or unusual diligence, therefore, is afforded them. They were appointed arbitrarily, for reasons of which their superior is the sole judge, and they have the ever-present consciousness of being liable to removal for reasons which all effort on their part may fail to overcome. If the system were designed expressly to exclude the able, the ambitious, and the energetic, and to offer premiums to inefficiency and laxity of conscience, it would probably be exactly as it is. And so long as it shall be permitted to remain so, we must look for its fruit in exposures akin to those with which the public have recently become familiar.

This country now stands almost alone in its neglect of the conditions essential to an effective service. England and Russia, perhaps, come nearest in their shortcomings, though both have taken strides in advance of the United States. Fourteen years ago an official report to the English Government compressed into a sentence a statement which is still applicable here:—"Admission to the civil service is, indeed, sought after; but it is for the numbers and the indolent or incapable that it is chiefly desired." Marked improvements have since been carried out. The principle of competitive examination has been adopted, though its benefits are kept within narrow compass by the patronage which retains the highest offices. Of the systems that prevail in other countries of Europe we are informed by the North American Review, the current number of which has a short but suggestive article on the subject. In France, Napoleon, "that all public offices should be filled by the most competent persons," and in their turn these must disappear completely while the idea of a vast, consolidated, unified nation arises distinctly before the national mind as the goal of our ambitious hopes. In order to reach this goal we need a higher style of statesmanship than even that which successfully laid the foundations of the republic. To restore internal peace and prosperity, to develop our inexhaustible sources of material wealth, to apply to the marvellous agencies of modern science and civilization, to educate, refine and elevate the national character, and

tion in the dispensation of its public offices does not exist in the civil service, though it exists in our military and naval services, the stringent discipline and efficiency of which are well known to all Americans."

The opposition encountered by Mr. Jencks in the late Congress does not permit us to be sanguine in the expectation of immediate reform. The enormous amount of patronage which the existing system confers is too valuable as a partisan agency to be surrendered without resistance. The party in possession refuse to give up the benefit of its influence, and the party out of office refuse to forego their reversionary rights. The crowd of politicians on both sides make common cause in defense of a system which is rendered valuable for their purposes by its defects and the corruption which it breeds. There will be no change until the intelligence and moral principle of the country protest, in more emphatic terms than have yet been heard, against the source of the evils which are now traceable to the civil service. Its defects and its demoralizing tendencies are equalled by its wastefulness, and a wise economy will ultimately enforce a change. When the taxpayers find their burdens too grievous to be borne, they will not disregard the loss of millions and hundreds of millions which attend the working of the present system. When the machinery of government shall be run in the interest of the republic, and that honest experience and tried ability shall carry more weight than the indorsement of members of Congress or the support of "rings," we may hope for the enactment of something like Mr. Jencks' Civil Service bill. Till then, let us cultivate patience.

Negro "Insolence."

From the N. Y. Tribune. The New York Times, in the course of a "half-and-half" leader on "The Division of Races," says:—"Take the Virginia election as an illustration. The blacks voted one way, the whites another, is that evidence that the blacks are pursuing a course which points to the antagonism of races? The great majority of whites voted primarily against a Convention that is, against reconstruction based upon political equality; and, secondly, in favor of candidates who were openly and avowedly hostile to the negroes. It is surprising that the blacks voted solidly against their own degradation and disfranchisement, and in support of candidates who were openly and avowedly hostile to their race. And is it fair, when deprecating the tendencies of the time, to forget the unwise, and even unprincipled, proceedings of the whites, and to remember only the folly and insolence of the blacks?"

Comments by the Tribune.

Whoever has any knowledge of human nature, and more especially of negro nature, must know that the Virginia blacks would most gladly and proudly have voted for the ablest and most eminent of the Virginia whites, if the whites, as a class, would have let them. But for the ever-present horror of being sold to some slave-trader, and sent South to be driven in gangs in the cotton-fields, the Virginia slaves were a happy people—not overworked, but amply and simply though coarsely fed, and loving their homes with a passionate devotion. A slave was proud of his master's social rank, his wealth, his broad domain, whenever he could be, and spoke fondly of "my cattle," "my horses," etc., with an unconscious identification of his own interests with his master's. We know no country with a strictly laboring class superior in docility or efficiency to that of Old Virginia. All that was needed to attach that class firmly to the political fortunes of her white aristocracy was simply an earnest, hearty recognition of the freedmen's manhood and their newly acquired political rights.

The great mass of the whites, and especially of the former aristocracy, have chosen to refuse that recognition. They began, directly after Lincoln's death, by conspiring to give the freedmen barely enough for the most paltry amount of legislation, under Johnson's reconstruction, to deny them the most essential civil rights. And, when Congress dictated a new and different plan of reconstruction, by which power is based on loyalty and manhood, not on color, they combined to resist such reconstruction to the bitter end.

Such being the facts—and the Times substantially admits them—we ask, earnestly, what is meant by "the folly and insolence of the blacks?" We challenge specifications. We sue for evidence. That they did not convert to disfranchisement themselves and flouted them if they had? That they sometimes made mistakes, and distrusted where they might wisely have reposed faith, we believe; but is it a wonder that—in view of the formidable conspiracy to crush them—they chose to vote for the candidates who seemed most thorough-going in defense of their rights? Professions are cheap, you say, but as between the man who offers to render me a great service and one who puts his pistol to my head and bids me stand and deliver, can you blame me for preferring the former? This may possibly be "folly," though we hardly see it; but how can it be "insolence"? Do let us understand!

A New Era for American Statesmanship.

From the N. Y. Herald. Our late war was but a portion of the grand series of sequences and causes which constitute their revolution through which the American people have been and still are passing towards the predestined future. When the war closed with the surrender of Lee's army to Grant near Appomattox Court House, a new era for American statesmanship was opened. It soon began to be apparent that the nation had outgrown the swaddling clothes and leading strings of its infancy. It must now, in its manhood, gird itself to run the race that is set before it. The "abstractions" of State rights have dissolved, leaving behind them but a dim and misty tradition of old conflicting sectional interests. In their turn these must disappear completely while the idea of a vast, consolidated, unified nation arises distinctly before the national mind as the goal of our ambitious hopes. In order to reach this goal we need a higher style of statesmanship than even that which successfully laid the foundations of the republic. To restore internal peace and prosperity, to develop our inexhaustible sources of material wealth, to apply to the marvellous agencies of modern science and civilization, to educate, refine and elevate the national character, and

to maintain among the great powers of the earth the imperial position to which the United States are summoned by manifest destiny, is a task for the combined energies of the entire American people, directed by the wisdom and experience of statesmen compared with whom the pigny politicians of the present day will sink into utter insignificance and oblivion. Patriotism must take the place of greediness for domestic spoils. Broad and generous views of domestic and foreign policy must be substituted for narrow and bitter sectional prejudices. Questions of finance, and other branches of political and social economy, must assert their vital importance, and wrangling over dead institutions must cease. The art of governing must no longer be red-emped among the lost arts. None of the requisites which such thoughtful writers as Ansaldo Ceba and Henry Taylor, the one in his "Citizen of a Republic," and the other in "The Statesman," have proved to be indispensable in the rulers of a powerful State, should be any longer neglected. The popular mind should be trained to recognize and demand a high standard of excellence in the selection of their leaders. It should become the universal conviction that it is a blessing to have at the head of affairs the most intelligent and capable man that can be found in the country. Intelligence, and such qualities should no longer recommend a candidate. Let us not fear to trust the reins of government to a firm hand. The name of Grant heads a long list of heroes who have fought for the unity of the nation. Ignoring alike North, East, West, and South, these men of deeds and not of words have comprehended and sought the welfare of the whole country. By bringing out the latent forces of a people, unconscious of its resistless might, and organizing these forces for victory, they crushed the most formidable rebellions which any government has encountered. If they were to carry into politics the grandeur of the views and the energy which they evinced in war, they would conspicuously illustrate the new era for American statesmanship. They would be the statesmen of our future.

Southern Politics from the Negro Standpoint.

From the N. Y. World. The Southern elections, particularly that of Virginia, which was more warmly contested than the others, demonstrate that there is already a complete separation of the two races; and the acrimonious bitterness that has been developed renders it probable that this alienation is irreconcilable. It will most undoubtedly be permanent if the reconstruction experiment proceeds much farther on its present basis. There was never perhaps in the history of the world a great political and social crisis which found the men in power so unequal to the exigency. The country, however, lost no advantage in the civil war, in which a semi-barbarous population were suddenly released from servitude, there were two great dangers to be guarded against at its close, and consequently two great objects of national policy which ought to have been regarded as paramount. One of these objects was the early restoration of national harmony, and the other the establishment of kindly relations between the two races, thus preserving them from antagonism and their sections from anarchy. Neither the desirability of these ends nor the reality of the dangers can very well be disputed. Looking at the subject from the very lowest point of view, it was inexpedient for the country to sustain the burdens of war in time of peace; but large armies cannot safely be dispensed with so long as Southern hostility is not converted into friendship, nor if the two races in the South need to be restrained from mutual slaughter.

Now it is a matter of experience, which the Southern elections put beyond denial, that, in both respects, the danger has been aggravated by the Republican party. As a direct consequence of the reconstruction policy, the South is less reconciled to the North, and the negroes infinitely more jealous of the whites, than at the close of the war. The Southern whites have been provoked to sulky stubbornness, and the negroes stirred up to a pitch of seditious insolence which never before tolerated in the North, and is borne by the South only because the South is under the heel of a military despotism. If we could hope that this unfortunate state of Southern feeling was but a temporary stage in the progress towards solid and durable tranquility, it might perhaps be borne. But nothing is more certain than that, if the Republican policy is persisted in, matters will grow worse and worse. It is the necessary consequence of the reconstruction scheme to widen the breach between the two races, and to accelerate the relapse of the Southern whites into the bitterness of the old animosity. This will follow from the operation of the same nature in the circumstances of the parties. If you put a beggar on horseback, he will pretty surely, according to the proverb, ride to the devil. If you suddenly elevate an inferior race from abject servitude to domineering authority, they will under any circumstances abuse their power; much more when they are stimulated and set on by an arrogant political party, acting at a distance, and seeking to profit by their hostility to the subjugated whites. That the existing feuds will be constantly strengthened and intensified must be evident to every considerate man who will attend to the negro points of view.

That the negroes can shape matters as they please, follows from the fact that they are an overwhelming majority of the party which will control the State Governments. What they will please to do can easily be predicted from the views they take of their rights. The whole property of the South they regard as equitably theirs; and they can support the claim arguments specious enough to convince themselves. The reasoning is this:—Right is the creation of labor, and belongs of right to those who produce it. The negroes, as slaves, toiled without compensation to create the property which existed in the South at the beginning of the late war. If any part of it justly belonged to the white race, they squandered more than their share upon their armies, and the negroes may fairly claim the residue as the accumulated wages of uncompensated toil. This view springs up so naturally, and will diffuse itself so easily in the negro mind, that it will be the cardinal idea of the negro policy. As soon as the new State Governments are organized the negroes will control every Legislature, and plunder and

agrarianism, under the name of reclamations for past robbery, will be the chief object of their policy. There are various ways in which a legislature under negro control could begin their attacks upon property. One of the most obvious and easiest is through the power of taxation. The negroes own no property, and by laying the State taxes entirely on property they would escape all the burdens of the State Governments. As they would not share the burdens, all motives to economy would be removed. Profuse expenditures would be made for schools, to which all negro children and youth would be admitted, and as a consequence the spirit of caste would keep out the whites. The same would be true of hospitals and asylums for the insane, the infirm, the aged, the indigent; for orphans, widows, and even laborers out of employment. A militia would be organized efficient enough to enable the negroes to maintain their ground against the whites. This militia would be paid for the time spent in drills and parades; and their arms, accoutrements, and uniforms would be paid for out of the State treasuries, and be often changed or renewed. Taxes could thus be made so high as to equal the ordinary income on the property taxed, and when it had thus become valueless, it would be exposed to sale for the taxes, and finding no buyers it would be forfeited to the State and finally apportioned out to the negroes under some sort of an agrarian law. In this manner the negroes could in five years acquire all the landed property in the States of which they hold control.

We have sketched what would be the natural progress of the negro suffrage experiment, if the white people of the South should submit. But certain it is that they would not permit the experiment to reach its natural termination without uprisings to resist it. Before it had proceeded far, the South would be a wide theatre of violence and blood, or else it would require a Federal army of half a million to keep the peace. But the North will refuse to support such armies, and the final upshot will be that the Federal Government, after having whetted the appetite for vengeance, will leave the two races to wreak it on each other, when the negroes will be slaughtered with as little compunction or remorse as if they were herds of wolves. We supplicate candid men to weigh these probabilities; and explain to themselves, if they can, how calamities so hideous are to be averted. Is it not true that the Reconstruction scheme has, thus far, produced nothing but division and bitterness? Is it not certain that, if pushed through with a high hand, it will increase the exasperation? Does it not plainly follow that the only security for peace in the South is an increase of the military force? And when an overburdened people shall refuse to be taxed for this purpose, and the armies are withdrawn and disbanded, and pent-up vengeance is let loose, its desolating effects will cause the negroes to rue the day when they fell into the hands of the radicals. If Congress persists in this mad experiment, the condition of the South will be very much worse than it is now before it is better.

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